



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Baker Success Story and Lessons Learned

Bringing Farm-Fresh Produce to Baker

Intervention Summary

Healthy San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) has successfully built a sustainable Harvest of the Month program in elementary schools across the densely populated southwestern corner of San Bernardino County. However, vast areas of the county remain underserved, and the people in those communities are justifiably frustrated with the lack of access to healthy food, and programs available elsewhere in the county. One of those communities is the city of Baker, population 735, located off Interstate 40. Baker has only convenience stores, so residents must travel 65 miles or more to purchase fresh food at a reasonable price. This difficulty is also experienced in the Baker school system, which mainly serves prepared meals with little fresh produce offerings.

The Superintendent of Baker Valley Unified School District was determined to bring healthy, local fruits and vegetables, as well as nutrition education, to her students and their community; Baker Valley Unified demonstrated their commitment to the issue of access to healthy food and nutrition education by including explicit actions on these topics in the district's Local Control Accountability Plan. Healthy SBCSS staff facilitated communication with a local farmer and a Nutrition Services Director at another district to arrange a relay system for delivery of fresh local produce for student meals. The reception by students and staff to the fresh produce was overwhelmingly positive. The Superintendent stated, "Our kids love the grandma orange tree story, and one said they feel like a queen eating oranges from the 100 year old grandma tree!" Weekly produce deliveries now include Farm Share produce boxes, purchased by staff and families for their personal consumption. In addition, plans are underway to begin the Harvest of the Month program in elementary classrooms serving 60 students in October, 2015, utilizing the same relay delivery system for the classroom taste testing produce.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

The initial challenge experienced by the Baker Superintendent was the lack of a vendor who would deliver the small amount of produce needed to serve her 162 students in this remote location, Healthy SBCSS staff communicated with Old Grove Orange, a farm hub located in San Bernardino County, and Hesperia Unified School District, which lies about 100 miles southwest of Baker. The Hesperia Nutrition Services Director agreed to accept and store the produce for pick up and Old Grove Orange was willing to deliver produce for Baker weekly. The Baker Superintendent lives about 20 miles away from Hesperia, and was happy to pick up the produce to deliver to her students.

A future challenge we anticipate is that this relay system is dependent on individuals, so it can break down anywhere along the chain. A backup system, as well as written procedure, is needed to ensure that the students will continue to receive fresh produce weekly. Healthy SBCSS staff will work with Old Grove Orange to identify other potential districts to serve as delivery/pick up locations in the event that Hesperia becomes unable to continue in that role.

Because of the travel distance, another challenge will be maintaining contact to provide technical assistance to teachers implementing Harvest of the Month activities in their classrooms. This will be addressed through frequent email and phone communication, as well as internet video conferencing.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Short-term goals and actions include:

- Ensuring the continuation of the produce relay delivery system by maintaining close communication with involved partners;
- Providing face-to-face Harvest of the Month training and ongoing technical assistance for the elementary teachers to ensure a successful first year for the program;
- Assisting district staff to participate in Smarter Lunchroom Movement online training and webinars;
- Encouraging the district to include funding in their 16-17 budget for Harvest of the Month taste testing classroom produce; and
- Continuing communication with district staff through the District Wellness Committee to provide support for their Local Control Accountability Plan health initiatives.

Longer-term goals include:

- Providing ongoing assistance to the district to create written policy and procedures supporting their Local Control Accountability Plan aspirations;
- Assisting in the development of other partners, such as Feeding America Food Bank to provide regularly scheduled produce distribution for the entire community.

Contact information about this Narrative

Local Health Department Grant Name: San Bernardino County Public Health Department

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Author's Name: Melodee Lopez

Phone: 909-386-2912

Email: melodee_lopez@sbcss.k12.ca.us

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